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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

BY S. H. HALL.

(Read at the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Society's Organization, November, 1913.)

The Historical Society of Southern California owes its origin to a characteristic California trait. A citizen of a distant state, finding that his loyalty had lost nothing in transplanting to California soil, was soon seeking with patriotic fervor to preserve for posterity the story of his adopted state's past and the vital currents of her present life. Within a few months after Noah Levering had come to Los Angeles from an Atlantic state in 1875, he had seen the need for a historical society, and had determined to see this desirable end accomplished. In 1883 his perseverance was rewarded by the organization of the Historical Society of Southern California. In Vol. III, page 177, of this Society's publications, Mr. Levering tells how he began soliciting for this work during the County Fair of 1883, and how, after repeated discouragements, an organization was perfected on November 1st of that year. "I was soon convinced," says he, "that it was much easier to secure volunteers to quell a rebellion than to preserve the history of the same." One wealthy man wanted "Nothing to do with anything there is no money in." Of the twelve men who signed Mr. Levering's paper, three attended the first meeting at the Normal School and adjourned to meet at the City Court Room November 1st, when an organization was perfected.

The birth of the Society at this time was opportune, for it was a pioneer in Southern California, and it had no competitor in the state then. It had been preceded by the Historical Society of the State of California, organized April 29, 1852, but this society left no important record. Another association, known as the California Historical Society, published, in 1874, Palou's *Noticias de la Nueva California*, in four volumes, and at another time it published *Reglamento para el Gobierno de la Provincia de California*. This precocious youth seemed doomed to as early a death as its predecessor, leaving to the Southland the formation of a stable society. More than two years after the beginning of the Historical Society of Southern California a second California Historical Society was organized in San Francisco, March 6, 1886. After publishing 93

pages of general historical matter, it devoted its attention to the History of the College of California. In 1890 it published a paper by Prof. George Davidson entitled "Identification of Sir Francis Drake's Entry on the Coast of California."\* Since 1893 it has published nothing, and if now in existence it does not make known its activities.

Among all of these efforts the Historical Society of Southern California alone has persisted. In the Curator's report in 1900 he said, "Nearly all the larger states of the Union and many smaller ones have State Historical Societies supported by appropriations from the public funds. California has none. There is not to my knowledge any Historical Society now existing within her borders, except ours, which has made any collection or published any papers. If California is to have a State Historical Society, that duty seems to fall upon this body, which already has an honorable standing with state and other historical societies throughout the Union. This would be in keeping with the Society's purpose in its organization as set forth in the Constitution: viz., "the collection and preservation of all material which can have any bearing upon the history of the Pacific Coast in general, and of Southern California in particular."

Not only did the angel of death not smite this first born of the Southland, but from the day of birth, like a lusty youth, it has cried for milk, and has grown vigorous on homely fare. A homeless wanderer seeking shelter, light and warmth around both public and private hearths, it "had not where to lay its head" until far beyond its majority. Petition after petition to the city, county and state for a place of meeting met with temporary favor, only to be rejected a little later. In 1891 the Society obtained a partial promise of a room, fifty feet square, in the new court house, but the promise was not fulfilled. Then space was rented in the upper story of the northwest wing of the court house, for the nominal charge of \$5.00 a year, the lease to continue for two years if the county should not need it. The county soon needed it, and the minutes record that the Society met in the Los Angeles Public Library in May, 1892, and elsewhere the next meeting. In 1909 the Society again sought a room from the County Supervisors, but failed. At one time the state seemed about to come to the rescue, but the bill failed to receive the governor's signature. The migrations of the Society and its collection are well told by Mr. J. M. Guinn in Parts I and II, Volume VII, of the Society's publications. That the collections of the Society suffered much from lack of a proper place for storage and exhibit is shown by the report of Gen. Mansfield Feb. 1, 1886, that he found only four articles out of the many

\*From Publications of the Carnegie Society, 1908.

donated to the Society's Museum during the last two years. Because of such neglect and losses the Society found it necessary to appoint a Promotion Committee to arouse the interest of the community to the importance of securing historical material for the new Museum at Exposition Park. Sixty-four changes of places of meeting are recorded during fifteen years of the Society's history.

For some years before 1909 the Society had met at the homes of its members, but refreshments killed this, and it became necessary to find another meeting place. This is the only time that the Society has departed from its diet of homely fare, and then it paid the penalty for youthful indiscretions.

However, perseverance was soon to find its reward. In 1908 Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt became a member of the Society. Soon thereafter the Society began to meet in the halls of the University of Southern California, where with one exception it has continued to meet to the present time. One meeting was held, by request, in the Hollywood High School building, and was attended by about two hundred persons. In the following year the Society was assured of a fitting place for its Museum through the erection by the county of a Historical and Art Museum in Exposition Park. This Society was the pioneer in soliciting this building. In June, 1910, the Directors conferred with William M. Bowen in regard to quarters in the projected building. The Academy of Science, the Fine Arts League and the Cooper Ornithological Society were invited to unite in interviewing the Board of County Supervisors to ask that they appropriate funds to fit up the building. They promised means. The building and contents are managed by a Board of Governors, composed as follows: Two each from the Historical Society, the Academy of Science and the Art League, one from the Cooper Ornithological Institute, one at large and the President of the Board of Supervisors. This building cost about \$250,000. In the corner stone are deposited the names of all members of the Historical Society to December 5, 1910.

With the entry of the University influence into the Society in 1908 came a liberal increase in membership from the University faculty, as many as five or six members being admitted at a single meeting. A little later the public schools became interested, and the Superintendent and many of the principals and teachers have become members. It rests with these recent members to carry forward the work which the pioneers of the Society have borne with self-sacrifice for twenty-seven years.

An average of about sixteen papers has been read before the Society each year, or a total of about four hundred eighty papers in thirty years. Of these Mr. J. M. Guinn has read a total of eighty-six

papers, or eighteen per cent of the total. Seventy of his papers are published in the Society's annuals. He has been the Society's President, its Treasurer for seven years, and its Secretary and Curator for more than twenty years, and a member of the Board of Directors since its organization. The steadfastness of purpose of the founders is further evidenced by the fact that in thirty years of its life the Society has had but eight secretaries, but five treasurers, and but three curators, and of these sixteen names twelve are found among the twenty-two founders of the Society. The membership of the Society, however, has not been limited to a few men. The roll of members includes two hundred names. Nor has either the membership or the work been entirely local. The publication of the Sutro documents concerns all California, and there are papers on the history of Arizona and New Mexico, and on timely topics of statewide interest, such as "Anti-Japanese Legislation." The Society has also sought the best interests of the state, even when that involved the promotion of the welfare of other organizations. It has solicited and obtained for the Museum the collection owned by the Native Sons of the Golden West and has sought collections from Miss Fremont, Mrs. Hollenbeck, Miss Wills and from the Chamber of Commerce. It has also sought to have the Board of Supervisors take an interest in marking historical landmarks. It has joined with the University of Southern California in inviting the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association to meet in Los Angeles (in November) and the invitation has been accepted.

The Society has received about \$4,000.00, all from the purses of its own members, and it has expended about \$3,800.00 in the publications and in the purchase of books. It has published twenty-nine annuals, of which it has distributed eleven thousand copies. These publications have gone to prominent citizens and to members, to newspapers in Southern California, a number of public libraries in the United States, to the Smithsonian Institution, to Mexico, Canada, Northern Alaska, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden and Australia, and have exchanged with the leading Historical Societies of the United States and Canada and with the Library of Congress, the American Historical Association, the Bureau of American Ethnology. The requests for exchange of publications from Historical Societies, Universities and Literary Associations are far beyond the power of the Society to comply with.

It is to be expected that a being of such vigor should have dreamed dreams and seen visions in youthful days, and records bear abundant testimony to this trait. At a regular meeting January 6, 1884, when the Society was but two months old, it considered a proposition to buy all or a part of the library of Mr. Alphonse L. Priest, which

was to be sold at auction in Paris one month later. It contained many books of interest to the Society. In that same year the distribution of the Society's publication was undertaken, as detailed elsewhere in this paper.

In January, 1885, the Society provided a "Historical Tablet in which shall be recorded the corrections of Apocryphal History, both local and general." In April, 1885, Mr. Levering proposed securing pictures of prominent residents of Southern California, and E. W. Jones suggested also pictures of old houses in Los Angeles, and old maps or copies of the same. In addition to the objects heretofore mentioned, *viz.*, the collection of material which can have any bearing upon the history of the Pacific Coast and upon Southern California, the first constitution also names the discussion of Historical, Literary and Scientific subjects and the reading of papers thereon, and the trial of such scientific experiments as shall be determined by the Society. The following committees were at one time maintained by the Society: Publication, History, Geology, Meteorology, Botany, Genealogy and Heraldry, Mineralogy, Entomology, Conchology. Later a committee on Archæology was appointed. In his retiring address in 1890 President E. W. Jones advised the study of records of the ancestors of Californians from every nation, their races, family, history, occupations, recreations, sports and dissipations, their soul-stirring achievements and the gentle flow of their social life.

That such hopes were not wholly visionary has already been shown by the later history of the Society. It is further evidenced by the Society's participation in exhibits of general and even world-wide interest. It loaned to the World's Fair Auxiliary "Such articles as will best represent the work it is doing," including the Sutro documents, and these were exhibited at the World's Fair in Chicago, eliciting compliments from eastern papers. An exhibit was also sent to the Midwinter Exposition at Seattle, to the Los Angeles Home Products Exposition, and to the World's Fair in St. Louis, and one has been solicited for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, 1915.

Every organization as well as every human being has its distinctly human side, the little incidents of daily life, sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, which make us feel the real touch of kinship. While meeting at the court room in the Nadeau Block during the winter of 1885, it became necessary to appoint a committee on lack of gas. This committee reported "That the gas was shut off purposely by the manager of the Nadeau block under the impression that the Society, finding no light in that room, would be compelled to hire another of him."

At a meeting on Nov. 20, 1885, "A Succinct History of Los Angeles for 104 Years," printed in the *Evening Express*, was criticised on matters of fact, and a committee was appointed to investigate. It was charged that the criticism was inspired by a representative of the *Los Angeles Times* because of the rivalry between the two papers. In 1891 C. C. Stephens was authorized to replevin the bound files of the *Tribune* in the hands of a certain person which had been garnisheed by creditors of the *Tribune*. (The *L. A. Tribune* that ceased publication in 1890.)

Among the books belonging to the Society are some very rare and valuable as source material. Such are the following: "Narrative of a California Volunteer," a bound manuscript volume of one hundred thirty-eight pages of foolscap, written by Judge Walter Murray; a manuscript copy of Colonel Warner's *Reminiscences of Early Days in California*; a collection of old Spanish manuscripts pertaining to the missions and the early days of California; the Sutro Documents, which are copies of valuable originals in the Archives of the Indies in Seville, Spain; and the log book of *Hermesilia* that made a voyage from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn in 1849.

The collection of such books after the exhaustive work of Hubert Howe Bancroft shows the need for such a Society as this. With a permanent place for the housing and exhibition of its collection, with a regular place for meeting, with the spread of interest in the Society within the past four years, with a virgin field of current history which grows richer and more complex every year of our wonderful development, the Society looks out upon a future rich with promise.

#### NAMES OF FOUNDERS.

The organization of the Society was completed December 6, 1883.

The Society has designated the following named persons as founders:

Henry D. Barrows	*Isaac Kinley
*Marcus Baker	*A. Kohler
*Edwin Baxter	*N. Levering
*A. J. Bradfield	*John Mansfield
*A. F. Coronel	*Ira More
*J. G. Downey	*John B. Niles
*George Butler Griffin	†J. W. Redway
J. M. Guinn	*J. Q. A. Stanley
*George Hansen	*J. J. Warner
*Volney E. Howard	†J. P. Widney
†E. W. Jones	†C. N. Wilson

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\* Dead. † Resigned.

## PUBLISHED PAPERS.

The following is a list of the contributions to the Historical Society's publications by J. M. Guinn:

1889.

History of the Attempts to Divide Los Angeles County.

1890.

Inaugural Address (President's).

The Great Real Estate Boom of 1887.

Exceptional Years.

Report of the Committee on "Meteorology."

1893.

Early Gold Discoveries in Southern California.

Siege and Capture of Los Angeles, September, 1846.

Los Angeles in the Later '60s and Early '70s.

1894.

California Fifty Years Ago.

Historical Debris, or Myths That Pass for History.

1895.

The Plan of Old Los Angeles.

1896.

Old Time Schools and School Masters of Los Angeles.

Captain Jedediah Smith, the Pathfinder of the Sierras.

Historical Houses of Los Angeles.

Capture of Monterey, October 19, 1842.

1897.

Early Postal Service in California.

Old Pueblo Archives.

Los Angeles in the Adobe Age.

Pioneer School Superintendents of Los Angeles.

1898.

Fifteen Years of Local History Work.

Some Famous Gold Rushes.

Old Fort Moore.

El Estado Libre de Alta California.

1899.

Muy Ilustre Ayuntamiento.

In the Old Pueblo Days.

Story of a Plaza.

Battle of Dominguez Ranch.

1900.

To California Via Panama in the Early '60s.

Historic Seaports of Los Angeles.

*La Estrella*, the Pioneer Newspapers of Los Angeles.

Rev. A. M. Hough (biography).

1901.

The Passing of the Old Pueblo.

Camel Caravans of the American Desert.

The Pony Express.

1902.

Poetry of the Argonauts.

El Cañon Perdido.

Some Eccentric Characters of Early Los Angeles.

Pioneer Ads and Advertisers.

1903.

Fort Moore.

Two Decades of Local History.

Yuma Indian Depredations and the Ganton War.

In the Days of '49.

The Myth of Gold Lake.

1904.

Down in Panama.

Some Historic Fads and Fakes.

Rain and Rainmakers.

1905.

How California Escaped State Division.

The Old Highways of Los Angeles.

1906.

Some Early California Industries That Failed.

Some California Place Names.

1907 and 1908.

California Under the Rule of Spain and Mexico.

The Pioneer Directory of Los Angeles.

Twenty-Five Years of Local History Work.

Las Salinas.

A Forgotten Landmark.

From Pueblo to Ciudad.

1909 and 1910.

Museum of History, Science and Art.

The Sonoran Migration.

The Passing of the Cattle Barons of California (from *The Pacific Monthly*, by permission).

The History of Cahuenga Valley and the Rancho La Brea.



### THE NADEAU BLOCK

Southwest corner of Spring and First Streets—The Historical Society completed its organization in this building Dec. 6, 1883, and occupied a room in the northwest corner for two years. The Society gave a reception in these rooms to General and Mrs. J. C. Fremont. The Nadeau was erected in 1882. The cut shows the building and its surroundings as they were in 1886. The low buildings in front cover the present site of the Wilson Hotel. Between the Nadeau and Second Street in 1882 were a horse corral, a planing mill and a school-house.

1911.

From Cattle Range to Orange Grove (by permission of *The Pacific Monthly*).

Pioneer Courts and Judges of California.  
 The Beginnings of the Los Angeles School System.  
 Pioneer Railroads of Southern California.  
 True History of Central Park.  
 The Gold Placers of Los Angeles.  
 The Romance of Rancho Realty.

1912 and 1913.

Juan Flaco's Ride.  
 The Lost Mines of Santa Catalina.  
 Passing of Our Historic Street Names.

## J. M. GUINN'S UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

These papers were read before the Society, but have not been published in the Society's annuals. Most of these have been published in newspapers and magazines:

The Historical Society of Southern California. Its Past, Present and Possible Future.

The Great Storm of Feb. 22, 1891.

Extracts from the Diary of a Pioneer of 1838.

Fragments of Local History.

Meteorological Myths and Superstitions.

Mission Secularization and the Passing of the Neophytes.

From Monarchy to Republic.

The Indians of Los Angeles Valley—Their Customs, Myths and Traditions.

Our Fourteenth Birthday.

The Evolution of the Pueblo de Los Angeles.

Phantom Cities of the Boom.

The Myth of El Camino Real.

Thirty Years' Work and Worry of Our Historical Society.

## OFFICERS.

## PRESIDENTS.

COL. J. J. WARNER.....	1883
COL. J. J. WARNER.....	1884
GEN. JOHN MANSFIELD.....	1885
ISAAC KINLEY.....	1886
IRA MORE.....	1887
HENRY D. BARROWS.....	1888
E. W. JONES.....	1889
J. M. GUINN.....	1890
GEO. BUTLER GRIFFIN.....	1891

IRA MORE.....	1892
E. W. JONES.....	1893
C. P. DORLAND.....	1894
EDWIN BAXTER.....	1895
FRANK J. POLLEY.....	1896
J. D. MOODY.....	1897
J. D. MOODY.....	1898
A. E. YEREX.....	1899
WALTER R. BACON.....	1900 to March, 1908
WILLIAM L. JUDSON.....	March, 1908, to 1910
GEO. FINLEY BOVARD.....	1910 to date

## VICE-PRESIDENTS.

H. D. BARROWS, E. W. JONES.....	1883
H. D. BARROWS, A. F. CORONEL, J. G. DOWNEY, JOHN MANS- FIELD.....	1884
A. F. CORONEL, IRA MORE, J. J. WARNER, ISAAC KINLEY.....	1885
H. D. BARROWS, E. W. JONES, IRA MORE, REV. J. ADAM.....	1886
H. D. BARROWS, E. W. JONES.....	1887 to 1889
C. N. WILSON, EDWIN BAXTER.....	1889
E. W. JONES, GEO. BUTLER GRIFFIN.....	1890
JOHN MANSFIELD, JOHN P. P. PECK.....	1891
C. P. DORLAND, MISS T. KELSO.....	1892
EDWIN BAXTER, H. D. BARROWS.....	1893
H. D. BARROWS, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1894
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, REV. J. ADAM.....	1895
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, A. C. VROMAN.....	1896
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, E. W. JONES.....	1897
A. E. YEREX, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1898
H. D. BARROWS, REV. J. ADAM.....	1899
J. D. MOODY, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1900
A. C. VROMAN, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1901
J. D. MOODY, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1902
A. C. VROMAN, MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.....	1903
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, DR. J. E. COWLES.....	1904
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, HON. HENRY E. CARTER.....	1905 to 1908
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, MILLARD F. HUDSON.....	1908
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, R. D. HUNT.....	1909
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, DR. ROCKWELL D. HUNT.....	1910
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, BURT O. KINNEY.....	1911 to 1913
MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON, R. D. HUNT.....	1913

## SECRETARIES.

MARCUS BAKER.....	1883
C. N. WILSON.....	1884 to 1885

J. C. OLIVER.....	1886
EDWIN BAXTER.....	1887 to 1888
B. A. STEPHENS.....	1889, and to July, 1890
C. L. GOODWIN.....	July, 1890, to January, 1891
B. A. STEPHENS.....	1891
GEO. BUTLER GRIFFIN.....	December, 1891, to December 5, 1892
J. M. GUINN.....	December 5, 1892, to date (1914)

## TREASURERS.

J. M. GUINN.....	1883 to 1890
H. D. BARROWS.....	1890
J. M. GUINN.....	1891
C. P. DORLAND.....	1892
C. P. DORLAND.....	1893
EDWIN BAXTER.....	1894
H. D. BARROWS.....	1895
EDWIN BAXTER.....	1896 to 1910
M. C. BETTINGER.....	1911 to date (1914)

## CURATORS.

IRA MORE.....	1885 to 1891
GEO. BUTLER GRIFFIN.....	1892
J. M. GUINN.....	1893 to date (1914)